

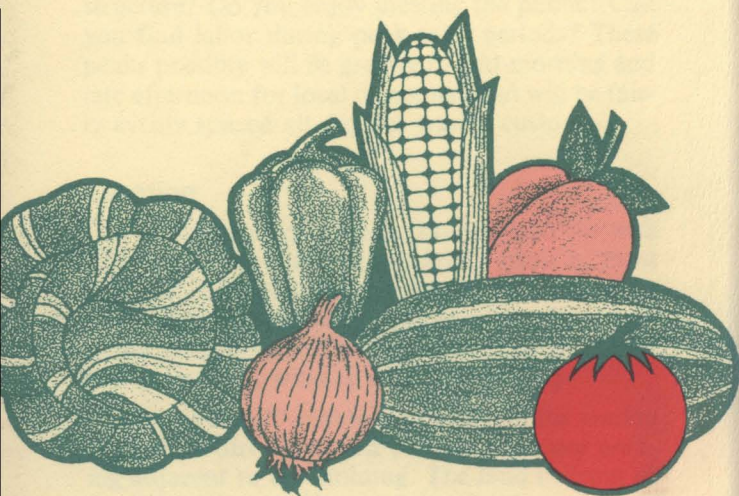
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Texas Agricultural Extension Service

People Helping People

Roadside Marketing



Texas Agricultural Extension Service • Zerle L. Carpenter, Director
The Texas A&M University System • College Station, Texas

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Roadside Marketing

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The roadside stand is usually located on the farm to sell the owner's products. Thus, the operation is seasonal and corresponds with the farm harvest. Occasionally, products produced by neighbors may be sold to offer a wider product variety. A successful roadside stand requires a suitable location with adequate access, parking and knowledgeable sales personnel.

In determining the success of a roadside market, several points need consideration. Is the proposed location a good one? What is the amount, type, quality and length of season of products to be sold? How will a roadside market fit into your farm operation? Is there capital available for a suitable structure? Do you enjoy meeting the public? Can you find labor during peak sales periods? These peaks possibly will be greater in mid-morning and late afternoon for local customers and will be fairly evenly spaced all day for transit customers.

Location

A level stretch on a much traveled highway with a possible knoll for the building itself is most suitable. Travelers can see the market and signs from a distance in both directions and have adequate time to stop. The better the view the better the business, if what is seen is appealing.

The site should enable easy access to the market from both directions and provide adequate parking adjacent to the building. The land in front of the building should be graded and either gravel or asphalt placed so that customers will not have to walk in waterholes, dust or ditches to get into the market.

Building Requirements

The building or stands must be neat, attractive and large enough for adequate displays with plenty of room for walking space. The building always should be in good repair and freshly painted with

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conservative colors. The floor can be of wood, concrete, clean shavings or sawdust. The roof should be sufficiently high to avoid heat radiation. A cold storage unit likely will also be cost-effective.

Advertising

Advertising is the best way to bring in customers.

Every roadside market has a specialty or something unique. What is yours? Do you specialize in sweet corn or strawberries during the season? Or perhaps you offer seedless watermelon. Include your specialties along with information about the success of your market in your advertising. This can be very convincing.

For fairly small markets, radio can be an inexpensive way to advertise, and is a good buy for the larger marketer too.

Newspaper advertising is always a good way of reaching your public. Some marketers have found it profitable to advertise in as many as five different newspapers.

Direct mailing has proven beneficial. Send out catalogs or coupons that invite your customers to come in for a better buy on a product in demand. A small inexpensive stand constructed to hold a large book for visitors to sign, giving their name, address and particular interest, can supply you with a mailing list and knowledge of the customers' interests.

Remember your customers during the winter season if your market is closed. Keep loyal customers happy by remembering them at Christmas by letter, personal contact or even wishing all a "Merry Christmas" in the newspaper.

"Middle-of-the-week slump" is a problem which can be solved by advertising a Wednesday special. Give away 2 pounds of tomatoes with each peck of peaches that is bought; people love to be given something free.

Try to put something in your ad that gives the customers something to talk about. If you use plastic mulch or have a new variety of melon, mention this.

Promotion

Some growers use special promotion methods. Marketers can create excitement through remote

broadcasts from their market by local radio stations.

Taste-testing or the sampling of the vegetables and fruits by customers is a great way to generate sales. Your produce is fresh, uniform and of high quality and you shouldn't be afraid to have your customers sample before they buy. Women like to pick up pamphlets or booklets related to produce in the roadside stand. If recipes for some of the more unusual vegetables, such as zucchini, eggplant or rutabagas are included, consumers will be more likely to try these items.

What about your stand's image? To decide what type of image your stand should have, you need to know what type of people come to your market. You can make your own survey by talking with them and observing their families, even their cars. Regardless of your market image, be it rustic or modern, make it clean. Have a screened-off area for storing bushel baskets, cartons and other necessary items. A lattice fence can provide a place for clutter.

Displays

Attractive displays give your market a good image. Most on-farm customers like bulk displays rather than prepackaged vegetables and fruit. Wooden baskets and plastic containers are used by many market operators. Paper bags with handles not only are convenient but are a source of advertising. It is best that the packaging does not resemble supermarket bags.

Items should be displayed at a convenient level on clean benches or stands—not on the ground.

Most market operators place price tickets in the display container; some list produce items and prices on a blackboard. Multiple-unit pricing works well. Offering three cantaloupes for a dollar has greater sales appeal than selling them for 33 cents each.

Lay out your market so that your customers can shop in a logical manner. Make aisles wide enough for free movement when carrying items to insure pleasant shopping.

Specialty items will give interest and attraction to your market. Offer your customers farm-fresh eggs and special varieties of corn and tomatoes that are particularly popular in your area.

Refrigeration space is not only a good investment, but for today's roadside markets it is almost a necessity. This is especially true when handling sweet corn and other fresh produce. Refrigeration insures freshness and eliminates extra handling.

That "Personal Touch"

All customers want to do their shopping where they get the best treatment. Personal service includes carrying heavy merchandise out to customers' cars.

Remembering the customers' names promotes good business. And taking time to train personnel to answer questions about your produce is worth the trouble.

Few people want to buy large quantities of produce, but it is good to be able to supply a bushel of tomatoes to a customer who is canning as a personal service. It can be frustrating to be refused by a marketer who will sell his produce only by the pound.

The market location, sign, effectiveness of your display, quality and selection of merchandise and advertising will make the customer stop the first time. The way he is treated during the first visit determines whether he will come back. Remember that selling must be a very "personal touch."

SUMMARY CONSIDERATIONS

Factors Considered by Buyers

- Quality
- Price
- Quantity
- Continuous supply
- Advertising and promotion

Market Outlets

- Direct to consumers
 - "Pick it yourself"
 - Roadside stands
 - Retail farmers markets
- Direct to retailers
 - Wholesale farmers market
 - At the store
 - Delivered to the retail store
- Truckers
 - At the farm
 - At the wholesale farmers market

- Local shippers
 - Resident buyers
 - Traveling buyers
 - Cooperative Marketing Association
- Direct to terminal receivers
 - Wholesalers and jobbers
 - Commission merchants
 - Chain stores
- Processors

Roadside Marketing

Points to Consider

- Location
- Volume, type, quality of products
- Length of season
- Time to prepare and sell
- Capital available for structure
- Meeting the public
- Available labor
 - Production
 - Harvesting
 - Grading
 - Selling

Proper Location

- Level stretch of highway
- Building located on knoll
- Travelers must see market from distance
- Easy access from both directions
- Adequate parking
- Asphalt or gravel lot

Building Requirements

- Neat and attractive
- Large adequate displays
- Adequate space between displays
- Good repair
- Freshly painted in conservative colors
- Clean floors
 - Wood
 - Sawdust or clean shavings
 - Concrete
- High roof (heat radiation)
- Cold storage unit

Advertising

- Each market should be unique with specialties
- Small markets (radio advertising)
- Newspaper advertising
- Direct mailing
- Visitor book (provides names for mailing list)
- Remember customer at Christmas
- Advertise for middle-of-week slump

- Something to talk about
— New variety (mention in advertisement)

Promotion

- Remote broadcast (radio)
- Taste-testing
- Sampling
- Provide unusual recipes for customers
- Stands (image should please clientele)

Displays

- Attractive—good image
- Bulk
- Wooden baskets
- Plastic containers
- Paper bags—handles—advertising
- Convenient level
- Clean benches or stands
- Produce not on ground
- Price produce
 - Blackboard
 - On container
 - Multiple-unit pricing (three cantaloupes for \$1)
- Layout (logical manner of shopping)
- Wide aisles
- Offer speciality items
- Refrigeration for freshness

Personal Touch

- Special treatment for customers
- Personal service
- Remember customers' names
- Train personnel to answer produce questions
- Quantities to meet individual needs

***Remember: Selling should be a very personal thing!
Happy customers are repeat customers!***

Educational programs conducted by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, handicap or national origin.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Zerle L. Carpenter, Director, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System.